



Enclosure 2a
August 18, 2020

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
July 21, 2020

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair McConaghy welcomed everyone to the July 21, 2020, virtual meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. He declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

Present: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, **Brandon Feliz, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

Absent: Marta Martinez

[**Ex-officio, non-voting member]

Chair McConaghy noted that today's meeting is the first for Brandon Feliz, Student Representative on the Council and Chair of the Rhode Island Student Advisory Council.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Karen Davis, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the July 21, 2020, virtual meeting

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

a. Minutes of the June 16, 2020, Meeting

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Lawrence Purtill, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the minutes of the June 16, 2020, Meeting

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Prior to calling on the individuals who signed-up to address the Council, Chair McConaghy expressed that we are faced with an unprecedented and complex situation that is changing continuously. Everyone is going through this together, at home, at work, with our kids, and the rest of our families and he understands that many families, teachers and students are experiencing fears, barriers and challenges. He underscored that the health and well-being of teachers, school personnel and students, is the Council's highest priority, and that when decisions are made in collaboration with the RI Department of Health and local education leaders, they will be based on facts and science and with the health and safety of everyone in mind. He thanked everyone who emailed the Council and the RI Department of Education (RIDE) in advance of the meeting, as well as those who signed-up to speak this evening, to share their concerns and ideas on the reopening of schools.

3. OPEN FORUM

Fifteen individuals (parents, teachers, and one student) who signed-up to address the Council in advance of the meeting, shared their concerns with the proposed State plan for the reopening of schools on August 31, 2020.

Written testimony addressed to Council members in advance of the meeting is available at the Office of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education.

4. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green began her report by sharing a bright spot from the work that RIDE has led over the last couple of months. RIDE received CARES Act money from the Governor to support student learning for children to participate in both virtual and in-person summer learning

opportunities. The opportunities through the Summer Learning Academy for Interactive Learning (SAIL), have been incredibly exciting, with more than 50 partners, ranging from URI, RIC, CCRI, RISD, Brown University, the Aquarium, student-led efforts, and everything in between. Rhode Island public school children have been enrolled in nearly 7,000 summer learning experiences and it has been inspiring to hear the leadership of young people.

Brandon Feliz, the Council's student representative, spoke of his first-hand experience with Readiness Project course, where he has been designing a student-led effort for students this summer. He shared that he is part of the Readiness Summer course for reading aimed for rising seniors and rising college freshmen. Students are reading Trevor Noah's book, *Born a Crime*, and the group has been having thoughtful conversations about systemic racism. The group has also been discussing metacognition - the awareness and understanding of one's thought process -, which has been critical to him not only in the work that the group is doing, but with the world that students are now living in with social distancing and other important things. Impactful

Next, Commissioner Infante-Green gave an update on the Turnaround Action Plan (TAP) for the Providence School District. She shared that the team has segmented their objectives into six workstreams, with individual ownership for each workstream and for each initiative within it. They developed a web-based tool, where initiative owners will develop and track detailed milestones and leading indicators of success, and next week, the team will kick-off a cadence of biweekly critical progress reviews of each workstream and of the effort as a whole. The team has nominated highly capable execution leaders for five of the six workstreams and are conducting a nationwide search for a Chief Academic Officer, who will be the sixth, and in parallel, have begun to execute on the quick wins initiatives. TAP metrics calls for raising the substitute fill rate from 50% to 75% and since COVID may further increase demand for substitutes, to meet the need, the aim is to hire an additional 150-200 substitutes in the next 90 days. This week the team reached out to 700 warm leads and began a partnership with the RI Department of Labor and Training to connect recently unemployed Rhode Islanders to substitute opportunities.

Commissioner Infante-Green also highlighted that Rhode Island is getting national attention for the right reasons, including a new report from the Johns Hopkins University Bioethics Center. The report analyzes the school reopening guidance for all 50 states and Rhode Island is one of 13 states that scored 12 out of 12 for planning factors in its reporting guidance. This is a testament to the amazing work being done throughout RIDE and all across the state, as district leaders, charters, and state-run schools, worked so hard with their teams putting together their reopening plans. All across Rhode Island, neighbors collaborated with neighbors to make sure their plans are as solid as possible, and teams of principals and teachers are developing new ways of thinking about the fundamentals of their classrooms. She emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic will end, but the lessons learned from this period of our history will not go away. We can leverage them to reinvent education in Rhode Island for years to come.

Commissioner Infante-Green ended her report with an update on a very important program – Extended School Year Services (ESY), for some of our differently abled students. She shared that she and the Governor have been approached by some groups, including a group of attorneys who represent parents in special education matters and some legislators, about the potential to offer in-person special education services during ESY. Typically students who receive these services require a high-degree of in person contact, such as summer learning, in order to make progress on their IEP goals and some of these students have not progressed as expected during distance learning compared to their peers. In May, RIDE requested each LEA, charter school and non-public special education program, to submit a plan to RIDE for providing ESY. At that time, the State was in Phase II and the majority of schools and districts indicated that they were planning on continuing distance learning during ESY. Last Thursday, RIDE sent a letter reminding school districts that there is no restriction on providing ESY services in person this summer (and has been the case in Phase II) and that they should consider in-person options for all students who qualify for those services, while ensuring all health and safety protections are provided. In addition, schools were reminded that if they are unable to provide the services, they have the option to utilize third-party providers for such services and should be meeting with parents individually to make these decisions.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Update on Rhode Island's Blueprint for Multilingual Learner (MLL) Success

Commissioner Infante-Green framed the discussion by noting that our multilingual learners are not reaching proficiency in English Language Arts and mathematics, and in many cases, the longer they spend in the system as an English learner, the worse they perform. To ensure success, the trajectory and design of our educational system needs to change through grade-aligned, rigorous and engaging instruction. RIDE is approaching this work from an asset-based stance and the development of a high-quality instructional framework is a critical component of the work. This work will inform the upcoming revisions to the Regulations Governing the Education of Multilingual Learners.

Next, Lisa Foehr, RIDE's Chief of Teaching and Learning, and David Sienko, RIDE's Director of Student, Community and Academic Supports, shared the blueprint development process, which will serve as the strategic guide to use with our multilingual learners so that everyone knows and can understand what the expectations are and what direction Rhode Island is moving in as a State – stakeholder engagement overview and data dashboards; work products – vision, principles and theory of action (6 goals), preview of components of RI's high-quality instructional framework for MLLs to thrive; and approach for revising the Multilingual Learner Regulations – timeline and key considerations. Mr. Sienko stressed that the blueprint is not only informing the State level policy conversation, it has already started to align with the work that is in the Turnaround Plan for the Providence School District.

Member Callahan asked how the blueprint will be shared with administrators, teachers, and families.

Mr. Sienko replied that there is a broader communication plan for rolling out the blueprint, giving everyone the opportunity to review it and provide feedback.

Student Representative Brandon Feliz asked if students were part of the process, to which Mr. Sienko replied that there are students in the advisory group that worked on developing the Plan, surveys were conducted for teachers, parents and students, as well as focus groups where students were engaged in providing feedback directly on the Plan. RIDE is also looking at packaging the Plan in a way that is more accessible teachers, parents and students, so that everyone can look at it and see their voice.

b. Reopening of Schools – Update

Commissioner Infante-Green framed the discussion by expressing that for the first time in a long time Rhode Island is leading in some portion of education – leading in distance learning, it has been remarkable what our teachers, administrators, parents, and students, and that she is proud of the statewide efforts that took place this spring. Everyone worked collectively to move the agenda along and as we now prepare to step-up again as a leader in preparing to start school in the midst of a pandemic. She shared that last Friday, RIDE received 65 draft reopening plans from the leaders of school districts, charter schools and state-run schools, and she stressed that in the coming weeks, those reopening plans are being reviewed and offered feedback, in collaboration with the RI Department of Health (RIDOH) to help with the health portion of the plans, and local education leaders. Each plan is expected to address how schools will reopen under four different scenarios – full in-person, partial in-person, limited in-person, and full distance learning. Final reopening plans are expected to be published on district websites on July 31. RIDE will continue to communicate regularly on the status of the planning process and supporting school leaders as they engage with their communities to ensure a safe reopening of schools. She emphasized that public health will drive all reopening decisions, and RIDE will continue to work closely with RIDOH to monitor the pandemic numbers in our communities. Preliminary determinations on which of the four scenarios schools should plan will be announced in early August, with final determinations closer to the opening of schools statewide on August 31.

At this time, Ana Riley, Deputy Commissioner for Instructional Programs, went over a presentation on the reopening milestones and scenarios, early insights of LEA plans, and roadmap to reopening. She reminded folks that on June 19, RIDE released a guidance document and a planning template, in partnership with the District Management Group (DMG), to be completed and returned to RIDE by July 17.

Council members requested that RIDE find out from the RIDOH what the metric/guardrails are, that will determine how a reopening scenario will be selected.

Commissioner Infante-Green responded that the RIDOH will make that determination in early August and will continue to monitor data and support schools with outbreaks.

Deputy Riley continued by sharing some of the themes and concerns that are coming out of the reopening plans and the most identified barriers in terms of considering bringing back students in a full return – transportation, staffing, scheduling, how to best deliver distance learning, and health and safety protocols for students or staff who test positive for COVID-19.

Council members asked how HVAC and ventilation and concerns from parents and teachers on the critical issue of having testing available and the return time needing to be better than seven to ten days, are being addressed, as well as the need to provide districts with safety measures and clear guidance around social distancing in classrooms and mask wearing.

Deputy Riley responded that ventilation is one of the things that RIDE asked districts to address in their reopening plans, but so far, she hasn't seen them elevated as a concern in the plans that she reviewed. As far as testing, there is a commitment from both the Governor and the RIDOH to work on providing rapid testing for schools and having twenty-four to forty-eight hour turnaround for results. In terms of social distancing and masks, all district plans have to meet CDC and RIDOH guidelines and RIDE has requested that districts have masks on hand for students and staff who do not have them.

Council members asked what the role of the Council is in the reopening of schools, that the Council needs answers to the concerns that were heard today, and that districts who are developing the plans, need more specific and clear guidance from the RIDOH and help in making certain things mandatory.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Chair McConaghy called for a motion that the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education enter Executive Session for the following item:

- a. Commissioner's Annual Evaluation, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a)(1)

Chair McConaghy noted for the record that Commissioner Infante-Green has been notified in writing of her right to have the discussion take place in Open Session and that she had no objection to proceeding in Executive Session.

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education enter into Executive Session for the purpose of Commissioner's Annual Evaluation, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a) (1)

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The Council entered into Executive Session at 7:39 p.m. Virtual access was paused.

The Council reconvened in Open Session at 8:10 p.m. Virtual access resumed.

Chair McConaghy thanked attendees for their patience while on hold during the Council's Executive Session. He confirmed that the Council is now back in Open Session.

Chair McConaghy called for a motion that the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education seal the minutes of the Executive Session held on July 21, 2020.

On a motion dully made by Jo Eva Gaines and Seconded by Lawrence Purtill, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education seal the minutes of the Executive Session held on July 21, 2020.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field,
Jo Eva Gaines, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

[Member Beretta did not rejoin the Open Session]

7. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Karen Davis, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education adjourns

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in
the negative as follows:

YEAS: Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Jo Eva Gaines,
Gara Field, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.